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THE

CELEBRATED HISTORY

OF THE RENOWNED

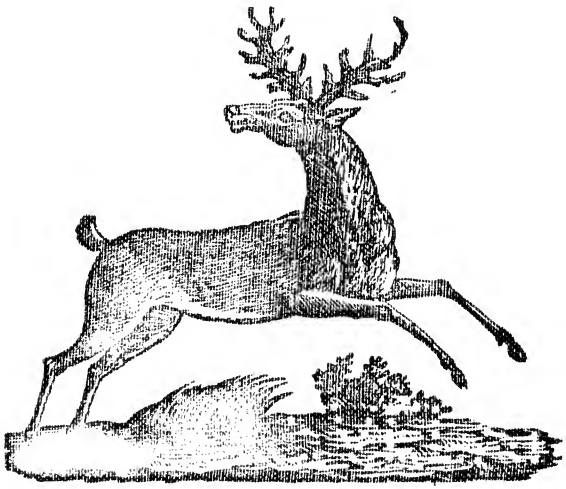
ROBIN HOOD,

THE MERRY OUTLAW

OF SHERWOOD FOREST.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE PROFESSOR OF SIGNS.



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HISTORY OF ROBIN HOOD.

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In the time of Richard I. king of England, the famous Robin Hood was born at a village in Nottinghamshire, and near which were many large forests filled with deer. His father was a ranger of the forest, and he had a rich old uncle, Squire Gamewell, a brother of his mother's, who lived about twenty miles distant. When Robin had reached his thirteenth year, it was determined that he should pay his uncle a visit at Christmas; and accordingly, after putting on a new suit of clothes, he set off on horseback, with his mother behind him. On reaching Gamewell Hall, they met with a hearty welcome from the Squire, who had a great company at his house, and the day was spent in great merriment. It was here that Robin got intimate with Little John, for whom his uncle had sent for to divert them with his droll tricks; out the company was astonished, when Robin got

up and played all the tricks after him, and in a better style. The Squire was so delighted with his nephew, that he promised to make him his heir, if he would remain at Gamewell Hall. Robin consented to stay, provided he got little John to attend him, for a great intimacy had taken place between them.

Robin Hood, to a very handsome person, added a courageous and enterprising spirit, and a disposition noble and generous; but his uncle's indulgence obscured his better qualities. Except an occasional visit to his parents, Robin lived always at Gamewell Hall, where he passed his time agreeably away in wrestling, quarter-staff, archery, and other athletic diversions, in all of which he excelled; and was attended by Little John, who was a ready assistant in every mischievous prank.

Robin had gone to pay his father a visit, when the Squire being suddenly taken ill, a messenger was despatched to hasten him home; but the dangerous state of his mother's health prevented him from leaving her till a late hour on the following day. In the meantime, the Squire finding himself dying, sent for a monk in order that he might make his peace with Heaven, and who prevailed on the dying man to sign a deed, conveying all he had to the church, as the

only means of saving his soul. When Robin arrived at the Hall, his uncle was dead, and the monks, who had taken possession of the house, shut the doors against him, and would give him nothing, which was a sad reverse to poor Robin, for he had been brought up as a gentleman without learning any business, and was unable to gain a livelihood. On turning from the Hall, he found Little John waiting for him, and, determined to unite their fortunes, they resolved to go to Sherwood Forest, and support themselves by their bows.

Although the Forest abounded with deer, Robin found that other comforts were necessary, which could not be procured without money; and thinking that the monks who had deprived him of his estate ought to supply this, he laid every priest under contribution.

The fame of Robin Hood, and the merry life he led, soon drew a number of young men to join his band, and increased it to above one hundred of the bravest fellows in the kingdom, whom he clothed in green. When the monks, from being so often plundered, came less in the way, Robin's men were obliged to extend their depredations to other parts of the country. It was only to priests, and the niggardly rich, that Robin Hood was an enemy; for he held the person

and property of every woman sacred, and always took the part of the weak and injured. By the poor people he was adored, for he generously supplied their wants from his own private purse.

Robin Hood, who loved a good joke as well as good booty, meeting one day a jolly-looking butcher on horseback, who was going to Nottingham fair, with panniers on each side, made a bargain for the mare and panniers, and an exchange of clothes. The butcher having put on the fine green uniform, Robin dressed and mounted as a butcher, and rode straight to Nottingham market, where he hired a stall, and began to dispose of his meat, giving more for one penny than the butchers could do for five, so that they sold nothing. The butchers supposing him to be some senseless spendthrift, and that a good bargain might be got off him, asked him to dine with them. Robin consented, and after dinner insisted on paying the bill; which was no sooner observed by the Sheriff, a cunning old miser, who was master both of the market and tavern, than he determined to take advantage of it, and said to him, "Good fellow, hast thou any horned beast to sell?" "Yes, good Master Sheriff," replied Robin, "if you will please to go and see them."

The Sheriff immediately ordered out his

horse, and putting three hundred pounds in gold into a bag, rode off with Robin on the road that leads through Sherwood Forest. On entering the Forest the Sheriff exclaimed, "God preserve us from the man called Robin Hood!" and they had not proceeded far when a number of fat deer were seen skipping about. "How do you like my horned beasts, Master Sheriff?" said Robin; "these are the cattle I told you of." "To tell you the truth," replied he, "I don't much like your company, and wish I were safely in Nottingham again." Robin blew three blasts with his buglehorn, and Little John, with a number of the merry men, immediately appeared. "Here, comrades," said he, "I have brought the Sheriff of Nottingham to dine with you to-day, and I hope he will pay for his dinner." The Sheriff was forced, much against his inclination, to go and dine with them. After the entertainment, Robin eased him of the three hundred pounds he had in the bag to pay for his intended purchase, and then placing him on his horse, he led him out of the forest, and desired to be kindly remembered to his wife.

One morning as Robin was strolling in the Forest, he saw a genteel-looking young man sitting under a tree, who appeared to be very melancholy and dejected. He

desired one of his bowmen to bring the young man to him; and when he came, Robin inquired the cause of his sadness. The young man taking a ring from his pocket, said, "I was to have been married yesterday to a young lady whom I have long courted, and I bought this ring for the occasion, but the Bishop of Hereford, her uncle, has rejected me, and means to give her to an old wealthy knight." Robin inquired whether the young lady had consented to her uncle's choice or not, and when and where the ceremony was to take place. Alan-a-dale (for that was the name of the young man) told him that the lady was forced to comply much against her inclinations, and that the marriage was to take place that day in the parish chapel, about five miles from the forest. When Robin heard the Bishop's name, who was his great enemy, and the time and place, he told Alan-a-dale to put on a cheerful look, and he would ensure him of getting his mistress. "If you incline to join our bowmen," said Robin, "bring your bride to the forest, and let her live with us; but if you do not like our merry life, you are at liberty to carry her wherever you please." Alan-a-dale agreed to join the bowmen, as with them he felt himself sure of protection; and then, seeing there was no time to lose, Robin disguised himself as a harper,

and ordered twenty-four of his bowmen and Allan-a-dale to follow him; but proceeded to the church alone, where he found the Bishop putting on his robes, who asked him what he wanted, Robin told him he was a harper, come to offer his services at the wedding. On the old knight and the bride making their appearance, Robin stept forward and said, "I cannot allow this marriage to go on, for the bride must have her own choice." ---Then pulling out his horn, he gave three blasts, and the bowmen entered the church. "Young lady," said Robin, "as you are now free, see if there is any one here you would choose for your husband." She no sooner saw Allan-a-dale, then she sprang to him, and said "here is my choice." Robin requested the Bishop to proceed; but as he refused, he pulled off his robes, and put them on Little John, who took the book, and went through the ceremony very gracefully, Robin giving away the bride. The Bishop and the old knight slunk out of the church, and the rest of the party went off to celebrate the wedding at Sherwood Forest.

The Bishop of Hereford was so enraged at the trick played him, that he made several excursions to Sherwood Forest with a party of soldiers, on purpose to take Robin prisoner. One day, as Robin was walking alone in the Forest, he heard the trampling of horses

behind him, and looking about, saw the Bishop with six of his followers in pursuit of him. As they were only at a short distance behind him, Robin had no time to lose, therefore he ran forward till he reached the cottage of a poor old woman, into which he rushed and begged her to save his life. She immedietely exchanged clothes with him, and as the Bishop came in with his men, Robin passed by them and got clear off. When he came in sight of his band, one of the bowmen, who observed him coming, cried out "A witch, a witch!" and was about to let fly an arrow at him, when Robin discovered himself. He then told Little John to kill a fat deer, as the Bishop of Hereford was to dine with them, and taking his bowmen along with him, went to a particular spot to wait for his guest.

When the Bishop entered the cottage, he seized the old woman, who was in Robin's clothes and said, "I know you are one of Robin Hood's gang, therefore take me to where he is, and your life shall be saved." The old woman, who had got her directions from Robin, agreed to take him; and being soon mounted, they rode on to an opening in the Forest, where Robin's bowmen were all drawn up, when the Bishop asked, "who are these?" "I think it is Robin Hood, whom you want, and his merry men," replied she;

"but I cannot be certain, for I am only a poor old woman, who changed clothes with him." The Bishop, after bestowing a hearty malediction on the old woman, was turning to ride off; but Robin brought him down from his horse, and forced him to go and partake of their good cheer. After dinner he made the Bishop dance a hornpipe, to the no small diversion of the bowmen; and having eased him of five hundred pounds, as payment of his reckoning, they led him and his followers to the high road, where the bowmen gave three cheers, and then returned to the Forest.

One fine summer day, when the merry bowmen were enjoying their sports, and trying each other's prowess, Robin, elated with his own superiority, said, "My friends, do you know any man that can match me at wrestling, playing the quarter-staff, or killing a deer?" Will Scarlet, who bore Robin a kind of grudge, replied, "I have heard of a friar in Fountain Abbey, who will draw a bow, wrestle, or handle a quarter-staff with any man alive." "Say you so," said Robin, "I shall soon have proof of that;" and taking his bow and quarter-staff with him, went to the neighbourhood of the Abbey, where he saw a tall brawny friar walking by the river side, and instantly knew him to be the man he wanted.

Robin tied his horse to a tree, and coming up to the friar, said, "Carry me over this river, thou brawny friar, or I will crack thy crown." The friar returned no answer, but immediately took Robin upon his back, and carried him to the other side without speaking a single word. Robin leapt off the friar's back, and pretended to be going away; but the friar stopped him, saying, "Carry me back again, thou fine fellow, or it shall breed thee pain." Robin took the friar on his back; and having carried him across the water, he then insisted on the monk taking him over again, or he would break his bones. The friar took Robin on his back; but on coming to the middle of the water, he threw him in, saying, "Now my fine fellow, take your choice, whether thou will sink or swim," Robin, however, got to land as soon as the friar; and challenged him to wrestle, shoot, and to a bout at quarter-staff; but at none of these could he beat the friar, nor the friar him. Robin was so well pleased with the friar, that he wanted him to join the merry men; but the friar would not consent, and even tried to persuade Robin to turn monk; so they shook hands, and parted good friends.

One day, as Robin was in search of adventures near the skirts of the Forest, he met a priest well mounted, with a fat buck

across his saddle, and disguised in a countryman's frock. Being in want of a horse, he resolved to rob the parson, and laying hold to the briddle, ordered him to dismount; but the priest struck a furious blow at Robin with the but-end of his whip, which he received on his staff, and soon brought the priest to the ground.

After robbing the parson of his money and horse, and requesting to be remembered in his prayers, Robin rode off for for Stratford. On the road he fell in with a rich country dealer going to purchase goods at Lancaster, with whom he soon got acquainted and they travelled together; but the merchant was so close, that Robin, could make nothing of him. On reaching Coventry, where they dined together, and drank some good wine and ale, Robin told his fellow-traveller, that as the roads they had to travel were so dangerous, the safest way was to conceal their money in their boots, and on seeing Robin deposit a bag of gold, the merchant did the same. They again continued their journey until they came to a part of the road which crossed two ways, where Robin pulled off the merchant's boots, in which he got three hundred pieces of gold, and rode off for Sherwood Forest.

At one time when the finances of the merry men were very low, they resolved to

plunder the rich convent of St. Mary, and to carry off the image of the Holy Virgin, which was of solid silver. Under the disguise of a poor blind minstrel and his mother, Robin Hood and Little John gained admittance to the convent; and, when the nuns and friars had returned to their cells, opened the gates to their companions. The alarm soon spread through the convent, and every one flew to the chapel for protection; but the bowmen having already entered the place, were proceeding to spoil it of what was most valuable, and to take down the silver image, when one of the nuns cried out, "Oh, mercy will they take away the gift of our queen, even while she is within our walls?" On hearing this, Robin said, "My brave comrades, desist, and let not disloyalty be ranked among our errors; this house and all within it are rendered sacred by the presence of Queen Eleanor!" The bowmen instantly obeyed their leader, and as they quitted the convent, Robin told the nuns to bless the queen for preserving their image, which otherwise would have bought wine to the Sherwood venison.

When the queen heard of the behaviour of Robin Hood, and that his respect for her alone had saved the convent from being plundered, she was so much pleased, that she determined to be a friend to him and his men.

Soon after King Richard's return from Palestine, he proclaimed a grand shooting match to take place in the palace grounds, and prizes were to be awarded to the best marksmen. Queen Eleanor, thinking this a favourable opportunity to execute her design in favour of Robin Hood, told the king, that she could bring one hundred men who would beat the most skilful of his archers. The king requested her to bring forward her champions, and if they were victorious, he would not only bestow on them the prizes, but grant her any boon she asked. The queen immediately despatched the following message to Robin Hood: "Queen Eleanor greets you well, requesting that you will take one hundred of your bowmen with you, and hasten to London; for a great match at the bow is to take place there, and she has chosen you and your men to be her champions."

On the appointed day, in presence of the whole court, the king's archers, who were thought to be the best in the kingdom ranged themselves on one side; while the queen's champions, all clad in green, with Robin Hood at their head, took their station on the other; but the queen was the only person there who knew them. After sounding the trumpets, King Richard announced the prizes which were to be bestowed on the best marks-

men, and the courtiers began to offer bets of six to one in favour of the king's men; but no one would bet against them. "Will no knight venture his money on my side?" said the queen. "Come, Sir Robert Lee, you must try your fortune;" but the knight begged to be excused, as there was no chance of success. The queen then asked the Bishop of Hereford, Robin Hood's old foe; but he swore by his silver mitre that he would not bet one penny. "If you won't bet on the queen's side, how much will you venture on the king's?" said Robin. "All the gold I have with me, which is five hundred pounds," replied the bishop, and he laid the money on the ground. Robin immediately produced a bag of the same value, and threw it down upon the green.

Before the bowmen began, Queen Eleanor craved this boon from the king---that he should not be angry with any of her archers, but that they should be free to stay at court during the match, and afterwards to have forty days to retire to where they pleased. King Richard agreed to this; and then ordered the targets to be placed. The king's archers lodged about forty arrows in the target; but Robin's bowmen, to the astonishment of all the court, placed all their arrows in the mark.

The captain of the king's archers, chal-

lenged Robin to shoot three arrows with him for one hundred pounds; to which Robin agreed, on condition that he would shoot one at the mark he produced. A fresh targe was set up, and the captain amidst thunder of applause fixed his three arrows in the mark, and one of them in the very center of the target; but Robin, with seeming carelessness, let fly his first arrow, which split the centre one to shivers, and stuck in its place. Robin then caused two willow wands to be stuck in the ground at double distance, observing, that this was the kind of mark he was accustomed to, and challenged all the king's archers to a trial; but as none of them durst venture after what they had seen, Robin, with the remaining two arrows, clove both the wands. The king's bowmen whispered to each other, that he must be the devil, for there never was such archery seen before; but the Bishop of Hereford said to the king, "I know now who they are; that is Robin Hood, and these fellows are his band." The king would not have allowed them to depart; but as his word had been already given for their security, he made a noble feast, bestowed on them the prizes, and sent them away with honour.

King Richard often thought of the wonderful dexterity shown by Robin Hood and his band, and having heard of many of

their generous actions, he regretted that they were outlaws, who by plundering those whom he was bound to protect, were therefore enemies to the state. Sometimes he would exclaim, "If I could make these outlaws faithful subjects, what a pride they would be to my court!"

One day queen Eleanor entered, and craved the boon he had promised to grant if her champions were victorious, "My dear Richard," said she, "the boon I ask is the free pardon of Robin Hood and his men, who will, I am certain, prove themselves worthy of your clemency, and be a valuable acquisition to your crown." "My dear mother," said he, "I can refuse you nothing; but, before I grant your request, I must see Robin Hood again, in order to discover what his sentiments are; for which purpose I mean to disguise myself immediately, and go to Sherwood Forest."

As the queen approved of this, Richard, accompanied by twelve of his courtiers, all disguised as monks, mounted their horses, and proceeded to the Forest. Robin Hood, who observed them at a distance, thought it was a whole monastery of friars, and he determined to plunder them. King Richard, who was taller than the rest, rode foremost, and Robin taking him for the abbot, seized his horse by the bridle, saying, "Abbot,

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stand, and deliver your money; it was a monk that ruined me, and I have sworn to spare none of your fraternity." "But we are going on the king's message," said Richard. When Robin heard this, he let go the bridle, saying, "God save him! and confound all his enemies!" "Thou art cursing thyself," said the king; "for thou art a robber, an outlaw, and a traitor." Were you not his messenger," returned Robin, "I would say you lied; for I never injured the honest and industrious man; I protect women and children and all the poor around me; it is only from the miserly rich, and those who live upon the labours of others, that I take any thing; but as you are King Richard's servants, I will not deprive you of a single penny, and also excuse what you have said." Robin asked them to partake of his good cheer before they proceeded on their journey. This being exactly the thing that the king wished for in order to sound Robin, he gave a ready consent, and then said, "was you not afraid singly to attack thirteen men?" "I am not afraid of ten thirteens," returned Robin; then putting his horn to his mouth, he blew a shrill blast, and one hundred and fifty of his bowmen instantly appeared in view. The king was so charmed with the sight, and the manner in which they obeyed their captain, that he

could not help thinking they were much better trained than his own men.

After dinner, the pretended monks again mounted their horses, and were preparing to take their leave of the bowmen, when the king said to Robin Hood, "Now, my brave fellow, if I were to procure your pardon and that of your men, would you turn faithful and useful subjects?" This being the first wish of Robin's heart, and for some time past always uppermost in his thoughts, he replied, "Abbot, I am tired of this kind of life; and though some may praise our bold adventures and generous actions, yet I now hate every thing connected with it. Were King Richard, who is a gallant soldier and a generous prince, to pardon our offences, and take us into favour, he would never have reason to repent his clemency, for he would find us the most loyal and peaceful of his subjects."

"Behold your king!" said Richard opening a part of the monk's cloak, which discovered the star and other insignia. Robin and his bowmen were instantly on their knees before him. "Rise up my brave fellows, your leader is now Earl of Huntingdon, which is his just right, from being next heir to the late earl. I restore you again to society, by freely pardoning all your past offences; and I expect from your future

good behaviour, and the services which you are able to render me by your skill and bravery, if you are inclined, never to have cause to repent of my kindness."

Robin Hood, now Earl of Huntingdon, and his bowmen, immediately swore allegiance to the king; and by their good conduct afterwards, Richard was induced to place them near his own person as a body guard.

THE

PROFESSOR OF SIGNS.

King James the Sixth on removing to London, was waited upon by the Spanish Ambassador, a man of erudition, but who had a crotchet in his head, that every country should have a professor of signs, to teach him, and the like of him, to understand one another. The ambassador was lamenting one day, before the king, this great desideratum throughout all Europe, when the king, who was a queerish sort of a man, says to him---"Why, I have a professor of signs in the northermost college in my dominions, viz. at Aberdeen; but it is a great way off, perhaps 600 miles,"---"Were it 10,000 leagues off I shall see him," says the am-

bassador, "and am determined to set out in two or three days." The king saw he had committed himself, and writes, or causes to be written, to the university of Aberdeen, stating the case, and desiring the professors to put him off, or make the best of him they could. The ambassador arrives, is received with great solemnity; but soon began to enquire which of them had the honour to be professor of signs? and being told that the professor was absent in the Highlands, and would not return nobody could say when; says the ambassador, "I will wait his return, though it were twelve months." Seeing that this would not do, and that they had to entertain him at a great expence all the while, they contrived a stratagem; There was one Geordy, a butcher, blind of an eye, a droll fellow, with much wit and roguery about him. He is got, told the story, and instructed to be professor of signs; but not to speak on pain of death. Geordy undertakes it. ---The ambassador is now told that the professor of signs would be at home next day, at which he rejoiced greatly. Geordy is gowned, wigged, and placed in a chair of state, in a room of the college, all the professors and the ambassador being in an adjoining room. The ambassador is now shown in to Geordy's room, and left to converse with him as well as he could, the whole of the professors

waiting the issue with fear and trembling. The ambassador holds up one of his fingers to Geordy; Geordy holds up two of his. The ambassador holds up three; Geordy clinches his first and looks stern. The ambassador then takes an orange from his pocket, and holds it up; Geordy takes a piece of barley cake from his pocket, and holds that up. After which, the ambassador bows to him, and retires to the other professors, who anxiously enquired his opinion of their brother. "He is a perfect miracle," says the ambassador, "I would not give him for the wealth of the Indies!"---"Well," says the professors, "to descend to particulars."---"Why," said the ambassador, "I first held up one finger, denoting that there is one God; he held up two, signifying that there are the Father and Son; I held up three, meaning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; he clinched his fist to say that these three are one. I then took out an orange, signifying the goodness of God, who gives his creatures not only the necessaries, but the luxuries of life; upon which the wonderful man presented a piece of bread, showing that it was the staff of life, and preferable to every luxury." The professors were glad that matters had turned out so well; so having got quit of the ambassador, they next got Geordy, to hear his version of the signs. "Well,

Geordy, how have you come on, and what do you think of yon man?"---"The rascal!" says Geordy, "what did he do first think ye? he held up one finger, as much as to say, you have only one eye; then I held up two, meaning that my one eye was perhaps as good as both his. Then the fellow held up three of his fingers, to say there were but three eyes between us; and then I was so mad at the scoundrel, that I steeked my neive, and was going to come a whack on the side of his head, and wad ha'e done't too, but for your sakes. Then the rascal did not stop with his provocation here, but forsooth, takes out an orange, as much as to say, your poor beggarly cold country cannot produce that! I shewed him a whang of a bear bannock, meaning that I didna care a farthing for him, nor his trash neither, as lang's I ha'e this! But by a' that's guid, (concluded Geordy,) I'm angry yet, that I didna thrash the hide o' the scoundrel!"---So much for the signs, or two ways of telling a story.

FINIS.

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